

TOWN OF KENNEBUNKPORT, MAINE

- INCORPORATED 1653 -

MAINE'S FINEST RESORT

March 8, 2013

Dear Voter:

A special election will be held on March 26. Because this is an unusual date for an election and because there are very important items present on the ballot, we are writing to each registered voter to provide you with information and to ask you to vote, either at the polls, or by absentee ballot.

Two items relate to the school department: cost sharing and withdrawal from RSU-21.

Cost Sharing for RSU-21

The first school related item is a proposal put forward by the RSU-21 Board of Directors to change the cost-sharing formula between the three member communities: Kennebunkport, Kennebunk and Arundel, for funding RSU-21. This proposal, if passed, shifts more cost to Kennebunkport taxpayers. Arundel and Kennebunk taxpayers see a reduction in cost for education. This question will appear on the RSU-21 ballot with language that begins as follows:

"Shall the method of sharing costs in Regional School Unit No. 21 be changed...."

The Board of Selectmen unanimously opposes this proposed change to the cost sharing formula and urges a No vote. Here is why.

If the proposed changes are approved, the tax rate will **increase** effective July 1 by .35 to \$3.96/thousand, or \$396 per \$100,000 of valuation, a 10% increase. The Kennebunk tax rate would decrease by .20 and Arundel's by .58.

Currently, Kennebunkport taxpayers pay \$3.61 per thousand dollars of valuation for the cost of RSU-21, or \$361 per \$100,000 of valuation.

In addition to this 35 cent per thousand increase on the tax rate, the proposed new cost sharing plan would significantly increase the cost to Kennebunkport taxpayers in the future to pay for capital costs related to proposed renovations to Kennebunk High School, Kennebunkport Consolidated School, and Mildred L. Day School in Arundel. The School District intends to seek voter approval for these projects within the next year.

Under the proposed changes to cost sharing, should RSU-21 District voters approve a bond for renovations as currently proposed, Kennebunkport taxpayers would see an increase of \$1.39/thousand on the tax rate, or \$139 per \$100,000 of value. The proposed cost sharing changes **increase** Kennebunkport taxpayers' contribution to the cost of construction by 34%.

The changes **decrease** the cost for Kennebunk taxpayers by 10% and for Arundel taxpayers by 35%.

In summary, the proposed cost sharing changes for the cost of education would result in the following changes to the tax rate for education:

Current Cost	Projected Cost	Projected Cost
Per \$100,000	Per \$100,000	Per \$100,000
of Value	with Cost Shift	with Cost Shift
	but without Construction	and Construction
\$361	\$396	\$535

The Board of Selectmen are supportive of renovating the three schools for which improvements are proposed and could support moderate changes to cost sharing that increase Kennebunkport's share of cost. However, the Board of Selectmen believes that the proposed changes to cost sharing go too far. The proposed changes related to old debt from the former SAD 71 are unacceptable and the proposed changes with respect to future debt for proposed school renovations should be pared back significantly. Kennebunkport, with 16% of the District's students, should not be saddled with 42% of the cost of new debt.

Warrant Article to Study Possible Withdrawal from RSU-21

The second school related item on the warrant is on the ballot as a result of a citizen-initiated petition that collected sufficient signatures to place the following question on the ballot:

"Do you favor filing a petition for withdrawal with the Board of Directors of Regional School Unit #21 and with the Commissioner of Education, authorizing the withdrawal committee to expend \$30,000 and authorizing the Selectmen to issue notes in the name of the Town of Kennebunkport or otherwise pledge the credit of the Town of Kennebunkport in an amount not to exceed \$30,000 for this purpose?"

This is a proposal to study withdrawal from the RSU. If this article is passed, the Selectmen must appoint a committee to draft a plan for the Town to withdraw from RSU-21 and educate Kennebunkport students through an alternate method. After the plan is reviewed and approved by the Maine Commissioner of Education, it must then be submitted to the Town's voters at a future date. If the plan were approved by more than 2/3 of those voting, the Town would leave the RSU.

The Board of Selectmen voted 3-1 to support the warrant article (**This is a vote to study the issue, not to support withdrawal from the RSU**). The Budget Board voted 4-4 not to support the warrant article.

More detailed information on both of the school-related warrant articles may be found on the Town's website: (www.kennebunkportme.gov) and on the RSU-21 website: (www.rsu21.net). Also, we encourage you to attend the Public Hearing for the warrant articles to be held Thursday, March 14, at 7:00 PM, at the Village Fire Station. If you are not able to attend, you may watch the hearing on local channels 2 and 16 through Time Warner Cable, or it can be viewed on-line through the Town's website, either live or on tape review at anytime after the hearing.


Finally, three candidates are vying for the vacant seat on the Board of Selectmen; Pat Briggs, Ed Hutchins and Dave Powell. There will be a candidates' forum on Tuesday, March 12, at 7:00 PM, at the Village Fire Station. In addition, the candidates' forum will be televised live on-line or can be seen on the Town's website.


We encourage all residents to vote on March 26. It is important that Kennebunkport voters turn out in large numbers because voters in all three towns will be voting, and it requires a 2/3 majority of those voting to change cost sharing. We encourage you to vote against this proposal to change cost sharing.

Sincerely,


Sheila Matthews-Bull


D. Michael Weston


Stuart E. Barwise


Allen A. Daggett